

## If P&C Insurance improves information flow across its Nordic operations with IBM

---

### Overview

---

#### ■ The Challenge

*To speed up access to data for business users in four countries, improve management reporting and provide a more efficient platform for IT and business initiatives across the Nordic region*

#### ■ The Solution

*IBM WebSphere DataStage software was used for the automated extraction, transformation and loading of data into the company's multiple data warehouses*

#### ■ The Benefits

- *Faster uploading of information into the data warehouses means that business users have access to data on a daily rather than monthly basis*
- *A less time-consuming and less labour-intensive way of uploading data has resulted in improved productivity for the IT team*
- *Development costs have been cut by 20 per cent through the elimination of manual coding*
- *A common data platform across the Nordic region means If can use resources more efficiently and improve the success of cross-border IT and business initiatives.*



Nordic insurance company, If P&C Insurance, needed to improve its management reporting and speed up information flow across four countries. Bottlenecks in its multiple data warehouses meant that data was being uploaded infrequently, denying access to timely information for business users. IBM WebSphere DataStage was chosen as the automated extract, transfer and load (ETL) tool to feed the data warehouses more quickly and efficiently and to improve performance. The company now has a common Nordic ETL platform on which to build successful cross-border business and IT initiatives.

If P&C Insurance is a major provider of property and accident insurance to private individuals and businesses in the Nordic region. With operations in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and the Baltic countries, the company serves 3.6 million customers and is

one of the 15 largest companies in Europe. A subsidiary of the Sampo Group, the Finnish banking and insurance group, If P&C Insurance is headquartered in Stockholm and employs some 6,800 staff.

The company was formed from the merger of parts of other Nordic businesses. In 1999, the non-life part of Norwegian company Storebrand joined forces with Skandia, which had operations in Sweden and Denmark, to form If P&C Insurance. Three years later, the non-life part of Sampo Group in Finland was merged into If and in 2004, Sampo took over If as a wholly owned subsidiary.

*“In both Finland and Scandinavia, the objectives were similar... to upload information more quickly and more frequently, on a daily or weekly basis, to improve management reporting and to provide a central repository for our metadata.”*

*Åse Gjerde Petersen, Head of Data Warehouse, If P&C Insurance.*

*“We chose WebSphere DataStage because of its processing performance, its ability to handle large volumes of information and its ability to interface with other systems,”*

*Åse Gjerde Petersen, Head of Data Warehouse, If P&C Insurance.*

### **Fragmented data**

As a result of this history of merger and acquisition, the company has lots of different systems and databases at work in its Scandinavian and Finnish operating units. The approach to data warehousing has also been rather fragmented.

In Scandinavia, the data warehouses are based on business intelligence software from SAS, while the warehouses in Finland are based on both Teradata and SAS technology. In both cases, the process of uploading data from the base systems to the data warehouse was rather labour-intensive, which meant that they were mostly only updated on a monthly basis. In turn this meant that business users, in particular sales staff, didn't have timely access to information, while a lack of management reporting capability was slowing down decision-making across the business.

“In both Finland and Scandinavia, the objectives were similar,” says Åse Gjerde Petersen, Head of Data Warehouse at If P&C Insurance. “To upload information more quickly and more frequently, on a daily or weekly basis, to improve management reporting and to provide a central repository for our metadata.”

### **Improving management reporting and lowering development costs**

Provision of a central repository for metadata was crucial. Because of the large number of historical base systems in operation, there are local definitions for products and processes in different countries. This means it is difficult to produce high-quality reports, benchmarking the performance of one country against another for example, because the definitions used for that data are different. “These definition paths are essential for good reporting,” says Petersen. “Definitions of data and processes were documented in Excel spreadsheets and Word documents but we needed a central place to store this information and we needed to improve the quality of our metadata.”

Finally, the company wanted to reduce its development costs. In Scandinavia, it outsourced IT operations to a third party and had its own team of developers, while in Finland, it outsourced both IT operations and development. Development costs were high, because the company had to do complex hand-coding to integrate application and transaction content across its operations.

### **Finding the right solution**

Faced with these challenges, If decided to streamline its data warehouse environment and to develop a common platform across its Nordic operations. It set about finding an extract, transform and load (ETL) vendor who could help integrate data from multiple sources and speed up the performance of its data warehouse.

After a lengthy and challenging selection process, If came up with a short list of four vendors and finally decided to engage IBM to help with the project.

“We chose WebSphere DataStage because of its processing performance, its ability to handle large volumes of information and its ability to interface with other systems,” says Petersen. “WebSphere DataStage could work with both our SAS and Teradata data warehouses and provided the ability to match data with the actual source systems. This offered the potential to improve the quality of our metadata.”

IBM worked with local partners in the various countries to deliver the solution – with Norway-based Intelcom in Scandinavia and Innometa in Finland. It also did a proof of concept for If to show that its technology could perform to the required level and meet its business requirements, while Intelcom and Innometa provided training to users. All support and training was provided in users' native language, which helped to facilitate acceptance of the new solution.

### **Improved information flow**

Following implementation, If is already starting to realise the benefits of the new ETL solution. "When it comes to improving access to information and speeding up the process of uploading information to the data warehouse, the IBM solution has been very successful," says Petersen. "For example, the sales organisation in Finland is now able to see what it has sold each day and to provide more accurate and timely reports. Meanwhile, we are spending less time and effort getting data from the base systems and into the data warehouse."

This increased productivity is also reflected in lower development costs. If has saved about 20 per cent of what it was spending on development, because WebSphere DataStage doesn't require complex recoding to integrate data. In particular, the ETL solution has removed some of the previous bottlenecks because it provides an automated approach to uploading data, streamlining the process.

WebSphere DataStage is up and running in both Scandinavia and Finland and is facilitating information access across If's Nordic operations. The next stage of the project is to replace existing interfaces to customer, policy and claims systems in Scandinavia and to claims systems in Finland.

### **A common business platform**

In the meantime, the most important long-term benefit of the new solution is that it provides a common Nordic platform that not only makes the business more efficient, but also puts it in a better position for future IT and business projects in the region.

"Now that we are using the same tools and processes we are less person-dependent in our data processing and can use resources more efficiently between the countries," concludes Petersen. "We also have a strong foundation on which to deliver successful IT projects and a sound basis on which the business units can work together more effectively."

*"Now that we are using the same tools and processes we are less person-dependent in our data processing and can use resources more efficiently between the countries,"*

*Åse Gjerde Petersen, Head of Data Warehouse, If P&C Insurance.*



**IBM United Kingdom Limited**

PO Box 41  
North Harbour  
Portsmouth  
Hampshire  
PO6 3AU

The IBM home page can be found at **ibm.com**

IBM, the IBM logo, ibm.com and WebSphere DataStage are trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation in the United States, other countries, or both.

Other company, product and service names may be trademarks, or service marks of others.

References in this publication to IBM products, programs or services do not imply that IBM intends to make these available in all countries in which IBM operates. Any reference to an IBM product, program or service is not intended to imply that only IBM products, programs or services may be used. Any functionally equivalent product, program or service may be used instead.

This case study illustrates how one IBM customer uses IBM products and services. Many factors have contributed to the results and benefits described. IBM does not guarantee comparable results. All information contained herein was provided by the featured customer and/or Business Partner. IBM does not attest to its accuracy.

This publication is for general guidance only. Information is subject to change without notice. Please contact your local IBM sales office or reseller for latest information on IBM products and services.

© Copyright IBM Corporation 2005  
All Rights Reserved.